



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FORMER TDCJ CORRECTIONS OFFICER SENTENCED FOR COCAINE TRAFFICKING

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that former Texas Department of Criminal Justice Corrections (TDCJ) Officer Roberto Ballones, Jr., was sentenced late yesterday to 180 months imprisonment for conspiring to possess with intent to distribute more than 21 kilograms of cocaine.

On March 1, 2004, Ballones and fellow TDCJ Corrections Officer Oscar Javier Cisneros transported a 21 kilogram-load of cocaine from Eagle Pass, Texas, to the TDCJ prison parking lot in Hondo, Texas. At the time, they were wearing their TDCJ uniforms to avoid suspicion at the Hwy 57 immigration checkpoint; which they had to drive through to get to work in Hondo.

Once Ballones and Cisneros arrived at the TDCJ prison parking lot, they left the cocaine loaded vehicle in the parking lot for fellow TDCJ Corrections Officer Cesar Daniel Mendoza to drive to San Antonio, Texas. While traveling to San Antonio, Mendoza was stopped by a Texas Department of Public Safety trooper, whereupon the cocaine was discovered.

All three defendants entered pleas of guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine. Cisneros and Mendoza are currently serving 87-month and 70-month federal prison terms, respectively. Ballones received an enhanced sentence because the Court deemed he was the leader of the conspiracy.

This case was investigated by agents with the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Texas Department of Public Safety. Assistant United States Attorney Daniel P. Kinnicutt prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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